

**West Mojave Plan
Steering Committee Meeting
May 15, 2000
Green Tree Inn, Victorville**

I. Tortoise Surveys

Concept proposed is that the West Mojave Implementing Authority would provide a list of qualified, available biologists to conduct surveys. Standardized fee; standardized survey protocol would be followed in every jurisdiction. There would be a “guarantee” that surveys would be conducted within a set timeframe.

–If demand cannot be met by available pool of biologists, it might be possible to train technicians to do surveys; utilize graduate students...

II. Management Areas (two-tiered concept)

DWMAs

- DWMAs are designed to encompass critical areas and be of sufficient size to ensure the recovery of listed species and conservation of other, rare, non-listed species so as to prevent listing.
- DWMA boundaries would encompass ground squirrel critical habitat also (light and dark blue areas on draft map)
- There will be a 1% ground disturbance allowance per jurisdiction on private lands per DWMA
- Definition of disturbance would be more restrictive in a DWMA because the implications of disturbance for species are likely to be more critical in the DWMA than in other areas. There could be a differentiation of temporary versus permanent disturbance with respect to prescriptions and calculation of the disturbance allowance e.g. road maintenance versus shopping center. One would also calculate the land area disturbed based upon implications for the species. For example, in a mining project, a fence around the entire perimeter would preclude animals and therefore the disturbance area would be the entire property. However, if a fence were installed around the area where mining was focused (i.e. to keep animals from being harmed), then the size of the area disturbed would be more limited.
- General concept of giving credit when land disturbed is restored. towards the allowance of a jurisdiction was proposed. Still have to address when credit would be given. It could be 10-15 years after the project is approved. Criteria re when land can become eligible for crediting back would have to be developed.

BUFFER AREAS/SPECIAL REVIEW AREAS (ALSO COULD BE CALLED TRANSITION AREAS IF BUFFER HAS CONNOTATIONS THAT ARE CONFUSING)

- Buffer areas and/or special review areas would be delineated within Incidental Take Areas. Development in buffers would have requirements that were more stringent than in other zones of the ITA, but less stringent than in the DWMAs, e.g. there would be surveys or other environmental documentation. There would be no disturbance allowance cap.
- Concept of a buffer is proposed to account for the fact that the ranges of included species are not necessarily coincident with mapped DWMA boundaries. Special review areas could be coincident with an isolated habitat that does not fit the DWMA concept of providing contiguous habitat, but still is habitat that needs some protective measures.
- Group discussed setting a uniform distance buffer around each DWMA as one way of delineating buffers, but then decided that this should be decided on a case by case basis as appropriate based upon the potential influence of adjacent lands.
- Wilderness lands, critical habitat on DOD bases should be added as buffer zones , because it is important to look at the comprehensive pictures of where recovery efforts are occurring and what are contributing lands.

INCIDENTAL TAKE AREAS

- Incidental Take Areas (ITA) are designated as all areas located outside of DWMAs where development may occur over the life of the plan. Land in ITAs may support habitat for or individuals of covered species, but it is expected that incidental take will occur.

The Steering Committee also discussed a two tiered management area concept in which buffers would be part of the DWMA. Responses to this option included that if this were the proposal, than the disturbance allowance would have to be increased, e.g. to 1.5 %. This was not the preferred option for several members. Once the group agreed that the DWMA boundaries would include the ground squirrel proposed critical habitat, this option was no longer discussed. The facilitator has included it in the record of the discussion for future reference if needed.

Discussion begun, but needs further clarification/proposals

Additional issues re allocation of !% allowance.

- up to each jurisdiction to allocate
- implications for “rush to develop”
- cap on size of any single project (we discussed this in the context of mining projects as an example)
- implications for existing claims (mining again was example discussed)

How to further create incentives for private landowners to donate, exchange lands in DWMA's

How will Fish and Wildlife and CDFG handle applicants after allowance cap is reached?

Does 1% apply to all types of potential land disturbance projects (to be discussed as we review each of the management prescriptions but again raised in the context of mining industry)

Measures for minimizing take even in areas where it is authorized.

III. Management Prescriptions

MINING

Re mining, there were no specific consensus proposals, but several concepts for future consideration and research.

a) BLM will coordinate a meeting with U.S. Borax to discuss its future projects that are likely to be significant in scope. Options discussed by the Steering Committee included: 1) separate out U.S. Borax or similar large projects from the Plan 10(a) permit. 2) include in Plan, but separate from 1% allowance in the DWMA; 3) other options will be discussed at the proposed meeting.

b) Proposed but no consensus on giving mining its own 1%. Counterproposal was that mining be included in the allowance, but that this apply only to projects of 250 acres or less, per proposal in the Evaluation Report.

c) Concerns raised re potential metals contamination and impacts to tortoises. This will have to be further investigated and factored into the Plan.

d) reiteration that site specific withdrawal of areas needs to be considered. Specific reference to Red Mountain area.

e) differences of opinion re whether the standard for mining lands should be reclamation or restoration. The Steering Committee requested that for the time being, they would focus on specific measures that would need to be implemented rather than differentiating the two terms. Ed La Rue was requested to provide the group with a list of potential measures to consider at the next meeting. It was noted that there was not sufficient information in the Report or Appendix for the group to come up with its own suggestions. Where possible, it was also suggested that he do the same for the other prescriptions that the group is slated to discuss at the next meeting e.g. road construction, grazing, recreation.....

The Steering Committee only had time to discuss mining. It was agreed that at the next meeting, the group would start at the beginning of the text on prescriptions in the Evaluation Report and try to get through all of the proposals.

IV. PROCESS

The Steering Committee members agreed that they had made good progress on some critical issues and that they would meet one additional day, May 31st. They would then hopefully have a sufficient number of proposal packages to take to Task Group 1 for its consideration. A tentative 3rd meeting date was set for June 12th, in case the group does not finish its discussion of management prescriptions. Members need to read both the Evaluation Report, and the Appendix in preparation for next time.

Bill Haigh was asked to a memo to Task Group 1 to cancel their session on the 31st and to inform them of the progress of the Steering Committee and proposed next steps.

Bill Haigh indicated that the completed ground squirrel information would be available by May 31st.

It was suggested that several members of the Steering Committee attend an upcoming workshop on future development in the region that is hoisted by DOD. They will then report back to the group on the 31st.